

TITLE

Fostering Project Social Sustainability Through Stakeholder Inclusion

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Abstract

Project-based organizations should respect different stakeholders' needs and expectations. In recent times analysis about the maximization of benefits through social outcomes has increased, and therefore sustainability emerges as value in organizations and in the economy. This sustainability reflects the demand for positive results, not only in the economic sphere, but also in social and environmental areas. The consolidation of these results mirror the real value that an organization contributes or detracts from its stakeholders. These sustainable social practices are closely aligned to The United Nation's Sustainable Goals (2020), focusing on promoting sustainable economic growth and infrastructure, reducing urban inequalities, and creating wide-ranging partnerships in society. After almost 50 years, the key message for organizations remain to put the agenda forward by actively contributing to a more cohesive and sustainable world, in which businesses should serve the interests of all society, rather than simply their shareholders (World Economic Forum, 2020). However, although stakeholder research has an established position within the field of project management, its interconnection with the social dimension of sustainability deserves much more attention in project studies. In fact, if social sustainability is not taken into account, it can lead to inequalities and human suffering within local communities and present a severe reputational risk to project

organizations, especially in complex social systems such as major infrastructure and construction projects. This book chapter highlights the importance of stakeholder inclusion in the decision-making process of projects as a means to achieve better social sustainability from an engaged governance perspective. It is deemed that project organizations should seek a strategic and systematic approach to achieving organizational purpose and goals by fostering the proactive involvement and harmonizing the interests of all stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Early in the 21st century, at a time when the corporate social responsibility agenda is being pressured by a devastating pandemic, increasing inequalities, and fake-news discourses, stakeholders such as employees, consumers, business partners, activists, and citizens are increasingly engaged in organizational activities such as strategy-making, product development, work coordination, and corporate social responsibility initiatives (e.g., Chesbrough, 2003; Edinger-Schons et al., 2020; Kornberger et al., 2019). In addition, as prior work has shown, stakeholder engagement offers to produce desired outcomes such as creativity and innovation (Wohlgemuth et al., 2019), efficiency and efficacy (Scherer & Vögtlin, 2020), value creation (Harrison et al., 2010; Harrison & Wicks, 2013; Parmar et al., 2010), and a social license to operate (e.g., Scherer et al., 2014; Scherer et al., 2015). Yet, mainstream management research continues to reproduce a managerialist bias by implicitly foregrounding organizational elites as decision-makers who act in the best interest of all stakeholders, without challenging the limits of this taken-for-granted assumption (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007; Miles, 2017).

Stakeholder research and discourse has a long tradition and an established position within the field of project management. In essence, a project brings together a changing and temporary constellation of different stakeholders with their diverse backgrounds, objectives

and goals that are constantly shaping the overall goals and outcomes of the project (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2010). Meeting their expectations and reconciling their needs is therefore a central concern of project management practices (Project Management Institute, 2017). Although, through a normative commitment to democratization, organizations should reinforce accountability and the inclusion of ‘new voices’ that comprise multiple actors in the decision-making process to prevent further urban inequalities opening up in society (Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017; Huemann et al., 2016). To date, the majority of stakeholder studies have highlighted an organization-centric view on stakeholders (Bondy & Charles, 2018; Derakhshan et al., 2019a). This organization-centric approach where knowledge about the nature of stakeholders’ behavior, values, demands, concerns and interests are mostly constructed from the organization’s perspective, has resulted in an “unbalanced approach in which the stakeholder voice is under-represented and remains a limitation of stakeholder theory” (Miles, 2017, p.448).

Delving into publications in project management journals reveals that the main feature of this concentration can be found in the under representation of the voice of stakeholders whose view is, for the most part, influenced through the words of informants from the project organization, such as project managers and project team. It can be argued that the consequences of this approach are even more substantial (e.g. Mitchell et al., 1997) where the often-competing resources within projects lead ‘primary’ stakeholders to maintain and magnify their powerful position in the stakeholder network through their formal contractual relationship with, or direct legal authority over, the organization (e.g. client, sponsor, and supplier).

On the other hand, this organization-centric approach has sometimes contributed to the marginalization of ‘secondary’ or disregarded stakeholders, such as local communities, which cannot be governed through contracts, rules and regulations, as these actors are external to such instruments (Derry, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2019). In this regard, the “normative stance of

stakeholder” literature (Eskerod & Huemann, 2013; Freeman, 1984; Jensen & Sandström, 2013) has long emphasized the importance of adapting a more inclusive approach towards all stakeholders. Differing from the economic-based view, the normative stance in stakeholder theory has acknowledged that business is always ‘moral in nature’, where the focal organization should gather input from all the affected parties (Jensen & Sandström, 2013).

Departing from the normative stance of stakeholder theory, in this chapter we aim to unfold the benefits of a more holistic and inclusive organizational approach to stakeholders. By highlighting that the value chain is represented in stakeholder terms, in which project organizations should yield a view of business as creating value for stakeholder, we reinforce how thinking about stakeholders leads to a different and more robust understanding of strategic thinking. In doing so, project organizations can more carefully embrace inclusive approaches to build stakeholder relationships and better considering their voices into the decision-making process in a way that can be sustained over time and thus achieving more social sustainable developments in complex systems, such as major infrastructure and construction projects.

This chapter is structured as follows. First, we identify and mobilize the normative stance of stakeholder theory and its relevance to project management as the enabler of stakeholders’ inclusion in the decision-making of projects, explaining the moral basis underpinning the organization’s actions and behavior as a mean to create value and sustainable outcomes to a broader range of stakeholders. Second, we link stakeholder inclusion with the social dimension of sustainability. Taking forward the engaged and inclusive governance perspective of social sustainability, the focus is on the engagement towards the often-disregarded secondary stakeholders (i.e. local communities). Our conceptualization shapes directions to guide project organizations and practitioners to look at their stakeholders as an end in creating value, and to embrace an inclusive approach towards stakeholders. This approach is aimed at enhancing input into how the organization is run and in which ways

different actors can achieve better value and benefits realization from it. Thus, seeking collaboration rather than manipulation, a project organization might promote fair and just actions in terms of both the process and outcome of the project and bridging together stakeholder discourse and project sustainability. Third, we focus on the construction industry and megaproject management, as a fruitful setting in which to explore both the opportunity and challenges of construction megaprojects and the way project organizations can improve their stakeholder engagement practices towards secondary actors, promoting their inclusion in the decision-making process, and thus improving the value and benefits these capital investments deliver to a broader range of project stakeholders. Finally, we highlight the need for organization to provide clear and transparent communication to a broader range of stakeholders, such as those that have had little to say in the decision-making process (the often-disregarded voices). It is claimed that through engagement leading to inclusive decision-making, project organizations might promote social sustainable outcomes and deliver broader stakeholders' value.

2. Stakeholder Theory and its Relevance to Project Management

The majority of stakeholder theory emphasizes that relevant stakeholders should have input in the decision-making processes of the organization. This may be for either instrumental reasons (e.g., achieving "buy in") or for normative reasons—the organization has a moral obligation to its stakeholders requiring that they have input into how the organization is run. In their publication titled "*What Stakeholder Theory is Not*", Phillips et al. (2003) state that the weakness of stakeholder theory is not in its conceptual framework but in its application, and that managing for stakeholders involves attention to more than simply maximizing shareholder wealth. Attention to the interests and well-being of those who can assist or hinder the

achievement of the organization's objectives is the central admonition of the theory (2003, p.481). In this way stakeholder theory is similar in a large degree with alternative models of strategic management such as resource dependence theory (Frooman 1999; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). However, for stakeholder theory, attention to the interests and well-being of some non-shareholders is obligatory for more than the prudential and instrumental purposes of wealth maximization of equity shareholders. While there are still some stakeholder groups whose relationship with the organization remains instrumental (due largely to the power they wield) there are other normatively legitimate stakeholders than simply equity shareholders alone.

Stakeholder literature has elucidated that stakeholders' actions against projects are the last step in a series of processes that begin with stakeholders trying to make sense of their environment, perceiving an organization's behavior, evaluating the fairness of the conditions made by the project, and developing emotions in response (Coombs & Holladay, 2005; McDonald et al., 2010; Tee et al., 2013). Debates regarding stakeholder theory frequently focus on how much each group gets (typically monetarily) from the organization. That is, who gets how much and why? However, also important is the matter of who is allowed to take part in decision-making concerning organizational objectives and strategies. At least since Freeman (1984), the importance of procedural justice has been recognized. Who gets how much of the organizational outcome pie is an important question, but so is who gets a say in "how the pie is baked" (Phillips et al., 2003).

Stakeholder theory is concerned with who has input in decision-making as well as with who benefits from the outcomes of such decisions. Procedure is as important to stakeholder theory as the final distribution of benefits and values that the organization creates. As the perceived justice of outcomes is substantially determined by the perceived fairness of the process used in distribution, it follows that greater participation in decision making leads to an increase in the perceived fairness of the outcomes (Phillips et al., 2003). However, in line with

mainstream stakeholder research, project studies are not exempt from the prevalence of the organization-centric perspective, in which the project-based organization hasn't used stakeholders as an end, but rather through mechanisms of prioritization and anticipation has often instrumentally attempted to make them comply with project needs (e.g. Derakhshan et al., 2019b; Eskerod & Larsen, 2018). Here, organizational behavior is not driven by the benefits that the organization can deliver to its broad range of stakeholders, but from the benefits it can receive from them. The practical consequences of this approach include the distant rationalizing of the demands and concerns of stakeholders, and even the alignment of them with the organization's needs (Aaltonen et al., 2015; Liedtka, 1996), which has been increasingly scrutinized both in theory and practice as organizations are increasingly asked to demonstrate a normative commitment to democratization and reinforce accountability and the inclusion of 'new voices' that comprise multiple actors in the project decision-making process.

Therefore, in recent years, a paradigm shift from the management of stakeholders toward management for and with stakeholders has been advocated (Freeman et al., 2010) and, in this regard, research has expanded to discussing more inclusive approaches toward stakeholders, the moral basis of stakeholder thinking in projects, and the need to take into account the disregarded groups, as well as address the value perspective and the value creation mechanisms related to project stakeholders. Since Cleland in 1986 introduced the importance of stakeholders into the context of temporary organizations, project management research and practice widely recognized that project stakeholder procedures are key factors in order to enhance positive input in projects (Bourne & Walker, 2005; Cleland, 1986; Cleland & Ireland, 2007; Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Olander 2007).

Stakeholder theory is a central part of the strategic management discourse (e.g. Buyse & Verbeke, 2003; Minosa, 2012). Nevertheless, the relationships with stakeholders in temporary organizations can be considered an established area in contemporary standards of

project management (APM, 2019; PMI, 2017). Projects are social systems and their behavior through social interactions is highly influenced by the context in which they are embedded. By drawing on stakeholder theory, that is a recognized framework for analyzing the behavioral aspects of the project management process, contemporary literature highlights stakeholder dissatisfaction as a root problem that causes many unsuccessful projects (Eskerod et al., 2015).

However, project managers have rarely looked at the project as embedded in stakeholder's perception of the relevant past, present and future in order to have a holistic approach within stakeholder analysis (Eskerod & Larsen, 2018). In fact, much of the knowledge about stakeholder analysis practices in projects has been from the stakeholder impact perspective, especially on the impact that primary stakeholders can exert on project outcomes. This perspective, despite more than two decades of refinement and integration of stakeholder thinking into multiple disciplines, has led stakeholders to be defined mainly by their generic economic functions (Aaltonen & Kujala, 2010), without the possibility to get richer and more profound insights on differing stakeholder perceptions, behaviors, needs and expectations.

3. Social Sustainability in Project Studies

Sustainable development and sustainability-related topics have become an established field of study both in general management (Schaltegger et al., 2019) and in project management (Huemann & Silvius, 2017; Sabini et al., 2019). Therefore, the growing interest in sustainability issues has driven businesses to increasingly consider them in their activities. This orientation reflects the demand for action, not only in the economic sphere, but also in social and environmental realms. The achievement and consolidation of these actions demonstrate the value that an organization places on its stakeholders (World Economic Forum, 2020).

It was first in 1997 when Elkington introduced the triple bottom lines of sustainability as economic, social and environmental. From Elkington work, it is noticeable how the ecological, economic, and social dimensions (planet, profit, and people) are interrelated and influence each other, with recent literature emphasizing the need for a holistic approach that integrates all these aspects of sustainability when making decisions in organizations and society (e.g. Aarseth et al., 2017). Therefore, wider attention has been recently given to the topic of sustainable development, where roots can be tracked back to the beginning of the eighteenth century (Morgensten, 2007). Regarded as a high-level objective in constitutional documents and official policies of states, regional and local governments (Hyunjurg & Darnall, 2018; Mossner, 2016), sustainable development has been generically defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). In this definition the values of solidarity and fairness between generations is thus evident. Later, in 2013, Elkington incorporated the term of transparency into his definition of sustainability. The scholar explained that corporations are obliged to be transparent in their decision making and the way they impact (positively or negatively) their stakeholders, since nowadays it is not easy for them to hide their influences on their surrounding environment. Therefore, in line with Eskerod and Huemann (2013), we believe that sustainable development is a normative concept, where organization sustainability depends on the sustainability of its stakeholder relationships (Perrini & Tencati, 2006).

Along with business and management studies, project management literature also dedicates great attention to the topic of sustainability (Sabini et al., 2019; Silvius, 2017). A number of research studies have been conducted to identify the interconnections between project management and sustainable development, such as developing sustainable corporate visions and strategies, updating procurement strategies, and refining project performance

assessment systems and after-sales service management (Eid, 2009; Silviu et al., 2012; Silviu & Schipper, 2015; Siew, 2016). The fast-growing momentum of sustainability challenges in practical terms, has seen literature exploring all aspects of Elkington's (1997) triple bottom line concept: environmental, social and economic, which over time has slowly shifted from focusing predominantly on environmental impacts (Fernández-Sánchez & Rodríguez-López, 2010), sustainable procurement (Zuo & Potangaroa, 2009) and sustainable control practices (Kivilä et al., 2017), toward a greater attention on projects' contribution to social sustainability (Shen et al., 2010), stakeholder engagement (Keeys & Huemann, 2017), inclusive governance (Agarchand & Laishram, 2017), individual competencies (Gaziulusoy & Ryan, 2017) and the social value of projects (Denny-Smith, et al., 2021).

Social aspects include “equity, human rights, labor rights, practices and decent working conditions, social responsibility and justice, community development and well-being, product responsibility, community resilience, and cultural competence” (Balaman, 2019, p. 86), all changes that are very difficult to measure. According to Wang et al (2018), although the importance of the social sustainability dimension has been recognized in recent decades along with the developmental momentum of corporate social responsibility, no consensus has yet been reached (McKenzie, 2004; Vallance et al., 2011). Contained in the vast literature on the subject of social sustainability criteria is a taxonomy that includes social capital, social infrastructure, social justice and equity, and engaged governance (Cuthill, 2010; Dempsey et al., 2011; Dillard et al., 2009). Social capital and social infrastructure are regarded as two preparatory aspects for achieving social sustainability through the provision of a variety of resources and corresponding facilities and institutions. Social justice and equity relate to the accessibility of resources and opportunities such as education, decent housing, green space and recreational facilities, and the protection of rights and liberties of individuals or groups in the social context. Engaged and inclusive governance focuses on the inclusion of stakeholders in

decision making (Dawkins, 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2019b; Xie et al., 2017). These together constitute a comprehensive system for empirical testing and from which social sustainability indicators can be derived (Cuthill, 2010).

Therefore, taking forward the engaged and inclusive governance perspective as one of main pillars of the social aspect of sustainability, scholars consider issues connected with ‘stakeholder engagement’ as a vital driver of overall sustainability considerations (Keays & Huemann, 2017; Ruggieri et al., 2016; Yuan, 2017). For example, Silvius (2017) notes that “having a management *for* stakeholders approach and applying triple bottom line criteria for business case” (2017, p.1484) secures better project performance. When considering stakeholders, it is instinctive to expect their inclusion in projects’ decision-making processes to be a component part of social sustainability. However, although the consideration of economic aspects of sustainability is also referred to the local communities benefits, and ‘environmental sustainability’ is also referred to the environmental impact that mainly local communities experience – ‘social aspect of sustainability’ is often the neglected component of sustainability (Rego et al., 2017).

Nonetheless, the growing importance of the social aspect of sustainability led academics and policy makers alike to further expand the traditional focus on the benefits of the project, by including a wider audience of stakeholders as the businesses’ social license to operate depends greatly on their social sustainability efforts. In this sense sustainable development and stakeholder inclusion very often overlap on the social aspect of sustainability. In line with this consideration, project promoters have been called on by governments to nurture constructive, mutually beneficial relationships with communities. A legal requirement in many countries, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), incorporates elements of Social Impact Assessment (SIA) to a greater or lesser extent (McCullough, 2016). For example, the IFC (a sister organization of World Bank Group) requires its clients to carry out a SIA as part of an

integrated Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) (IFC, 2014). The increasing importance of social procurement (i.e. UK Social Value Act, 2012) and the emerging principle of ‘new public governance’ can be an effective project management tool in leaving a positive project legacy for future generations (Loosemore, 2016).

Similarly, the first six UN Global Compact's principles focus on the social dimension of corporate sustainability, of which human rights is the cornerstone. For the UN Global Compact, sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people. Here, the quality of a company's relationships and engagement with its stakeholders is critical. Directly or indirectly, companies affect what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers and local communities, and it is important to manage impact proactively. While it is the primary duty of governments to protect, respect, fulfil and progressively realize human rights, businesses can, and should, do their part (UN Global Compact, 2022). By embracing ethical and sustainable courses of action, organizations should contribute in other ways to improve the lives of the people they affect, such as by creating decent jobs, goods and services that help meet basic needs, and more inclusive value chains. Nonetheless, they should make strategic social investments and promote public policies that support social sustainability, partner with other businesses, and pooling strengths to make a greater positive impact (UN Global Compact, 2022).

These sustainable social practices are also closely aligned with The United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (2020), and focus on promoting sustainable economic growth and infrastructure, reducing urban inequalities, and creating wide-ranging partnerships in society. Therefore, based on the above discussion, this chapter connects with the idea of social sustainability as a set of ethical practices, i.e. long-term strategies and societal wider inclusion in decision-making (Dawkins, 2015; Meadowcroft, 2013; Rickards et al., 2014; Zeemering, 2018). Our work reconciles, under the umbrella of ‘social sustainability’, the concept of

‘stakeholder inclusion’ and ‘social sustainability practices’ as the broader involvement of the often-disregarded secondary stakeholders (i.e. local communities) in the project decision-making and towards engaged and inclusive governance processes.

4. Major Infrastructure and Construction Projects and the Disregarded Stakeholders: The case of local communities

With USD 3.2 trillion in infrastructure stimulus announced, infrastructure investment has a strong impact on economic growth, as evidenced by a 2020 Global Infrastructure Hub (a G20 initiative) study that found the economic multiplier for public investment (including infrastructure) is 1.5 times greater than the initial investment in two to five years – much higher than other forms of public spending. This is a compelling argument for infrastructure as a stimulus post-COVID-19. However, the Global Infrastructure Hub is also encouraging government and industry to look beyond infrastructure’s impact on economic growth and consider it as a means to achieve transformative outcomes for people and the planet. Therefore, how the announced infrastructure stimulus will be spent, and exploring the outcomes that could be achieved in the social, environmental, and economic dimensions, will be pivotal for a more sustainable world. In this regard, *‘Transformative Outcomes Through Infrastructure’* (a new resource completed at the request of the G20) was presented to help governments, investors, multilateral development banks, and project directors across the public and private sectors achieve transformative outcomes from infrastructure investment (Global Infrastructure Hub, 2020).

Given that nearly half of the infrastructure for 2050 is either already built, under construction, or being planned; there is an urgent need to ensure investments address both fiscal constraints and social inequalities, transforming our economies toward an environmentally sustainable, inclusive, resilient, and digitally enabled future. Delivering excellent public work is critical for the

government to deliver the public services that we all rely on. Up to £37 billion contracts across economic and social infrastructure have been brought to market in 2021, and to meet this demand, we need to change our approach to delivery as public infrastructure and construction projects delivery in the last years have underperformed from their initial goals (Global Infrastructure Hub, 2021). This low performance underscores the challenge of engaging different stakeholders' needs and expectations and developing socially sustainable projects that fully understand and address local communities and regional needs for growth.

Government leadership is crucial and the need to align their efforts through better collaboration with industry has been recently taken forward in order to develop a Built Environment Model that draws a direct line between the outcomes we need as a society and the decisions we make to build, maintain and renew our infrastructure (e.g. The Construction Playbook or the IPA Transforming Infrastructure Performance: Roadmap to 2030 – in the UK). However, despite the government's presumption and in favor of sustainable development and the commitment to deliver on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), promoting sustainable outcomes which will help local communities recover from COVID-19, tackle economic inequality, promote equal opportunities, and improve wellbeing remains a major challenge (Infrastructure and Project Authority, 2017).

Therefore, more than ever, construction, as a global and long-lasting industry, has a need to improve its social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability. However, in contrast to the considerable academic and political attention paid to the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, the social counterpart is often ignored, or at most, is seen as of unequal importance (McKenzie, 2004; Kunz, 2006). In fact, social sustainability is one of the weakest sustainability dimensions (McKenzie, 2004; Brent & Labuschagne, 2006) and covers not only the social considerations of the final users, but also the health and safety issues of the project delivery team and even the considerations of the

impact on the environment and quality of life of the surrounding community (Dillard et al., 2009). Construction here is thus an inclusive term used to refer to a constructed facility, physical constructing process, and the related management activities.

The construction industry offers both a learning platform and a fruitful setting in which to explore the way project organizations can improve their stakeholder engagement practices, promoting inclusive decision-making and fairness, thus being supported from a broader range of stakeholders. In fact, projects as a vehicle for change, play a crucial role in the sustainable development of organization and society, and recent debates have encouraged research in integrating broader societal objectives (sustainable developments) within projects (process and final goals) (Huemann & Silvius, 2017). Although many steps have been taken in recent years in which research has expanded to discussing more inclusive approaches toward stakeholders, from both economic and social performance perspectives, project-based organizations are particularly susceptible to poor delivery of projects or inadequate stakeholder engagement, especially in large-scale construction and infrastructure projects (Denicol et al., 2020; Eskerod et al., 2015).

Major construction and infrastructure projects (or also, hereafter in the chapter, construction megaprojects) are defined as large-scale and complex ventures with long lifecycles, involving many public and private stakeholders, and potentially impacting millions of people (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Some examples are energy-generating facilities, infrastructure like buildings and bridges, transport and communication networks, and weapons systems. Megaprojects are typically resource-intensive and often politically controversial, generating opinion among the general public because of their public and political nature (Willems & Van Dooren, 2016) and their substantive and wide-ranging impacts (Walker, 2000). Megaprojects, due to their size, scale, technical and social complexity are expensive and controversial, and how they proceed and are managed over time is a key topic of interest (Kundu et al., 2021).

Construction megaprojects face intense pressure to minimize their construction and post-construction social impacts, thus such developments are a different type of project to manage compared to regular-sized programs, and low performance in sectors such as construction underline this challenge (Graute, 2016; Matti et al., 2017). Because of this, building benefits and trust with local communities are among the activities that should be incorporated within the governance process designed for megaproject management, in which project decision makers seek information from multiple sources, demonstrate an awareness of the community that benefits from and contributes to the organization's services, and establishes policies and structures to foster stakeholder contribution (Brown, 2002; Derakhshan et al., 2019b; Xie et al., 2017).

However, in such undertakings, legitimate stakeholders such as local communities, suffer the most as a direct result of their proximity to project development. As a result, projects are often considered failures by local stakeholders when not included in decision-making processes affecting their everyday lives (Derakhshan, 2020; van den Ende & van Marrewijk, 2019). It is acknowledged in the literature that the local community cannot be treated as a single, homogeneous, easily identifiable group since they possess their own perceptions and different visions (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013; Teo & Loosemore, 2011). Theodori defines the local community as “a place-oriented process of interrelated actions through which members of a local population express a shared sense of identity while engaging in the common concerns of life” (2005, pp.662-663), thus having a common desire that the construction project will deliver the promised benefits and improve lives and wellbeing. In line with this definition, we conceive the local community as built on a process of interactions and identity (Dunham et al., 2006), and emphasizes the traditional view based on geography, or place-based communities, which is centered on the physical proximity of members to project developments. This also represents

the most common conceptualization of what is meant by ‘community’ by project managers in the construction industry (Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2018; Teo and Loosemore, 2011).

Research and practice have offered evidence for the existence of a negative bond between local communities and project organization (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019). The existence of local communities in close proximity of a project could be a source of problems for project managers. There are not many successful examples of organizations being able to tackle the issues with communities through constructive communication and engagement. There is vast literature which recognizes the (negative) impact that local communities stakeholders can exert on project outcomes and how construction megaprojects developments are often seen as a threat rather than an opportunity (e.g. Aaltonen and Kujala, 2010; Newcombe, 2003; Olander and Landin, 2005, 2008; Teo and Loosemore, 2014; 2017).

Moreover, communities negatively affected by construction projects are becoming increasingly empowered, organized and willing to engage in protest if excluded from the decision-making process (Derakhshan, 2020; Teo and Loosemore, 2017; van den Ende & van Marrewijk, 2019). The 25 years of protest in Susa Valley against the High-Speed Rail connecting Italy (Turin) to France (Lyon) (Hooper, 2012), the riots during the World Cup in Brazil (Watts, 2014), the violent protests in Turkey over the construction of a shopping center in 2013 (Letsch, 2013), the national campaign against the HS2 in England (Pearse, 2020), and the obstructions to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) (CEE Bankwatch Network, 2015), are just a few examples of the ramifications of projects which overlooked the social and political context and faced local resistance because they were perceived as unsustainable by local actors. Empirical studies have focused on the impact of secondary stakeholders in large-scale construction and infrastructure projects in attempts to legitimize such developments in their environment. The North-South metro line in Amsterdam (van Den Ende & van Marrewijk, 2019), and the longstanding protests in Australia against a major housing project (Teo &

Loosemore, 2014) are examples of projects in which disregarded stakeholders have not perceived the organization's initiative as fair, leading them to engage in collective actions against the proposed developments.

Due to this, advances have been taken in recent years in the field of construction project management and beyond, elaborating the importance of being more inclusive and giving voices to secondary disregarded stakeholders (e.g. Cuganesan & Floris, 2020; Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017; Lehtinen & Aaltonen, 2020; Teo and Loosemore, 2017). Therefore, there is a growing interest in how local communities are treated and prioritized since these actors are recognized as being risk-bearers and can suffer as a direct result of their proximity to construction projects (Olander, 2007). Yet, while fast-moving laws, regulations and schemes are progressively requiring governments and project promoters to better include local needs in their proposed plans, project organizations seem ill-equipped in including legitimate community voices into the decision-making processes affecting their lives (Di Maddaloni & Sabini, forthcoming). In organizations constrained by limited resources, stakeholders are instrumentally managed to comply with the organization's needs (through manipulation and anticipation rather than proactive engagement) (e.g. Biesenthal & Wilden, 2014). As Phillips et al. (2003) assert, this neo-classical view of the firm leads to unchanged assumptions in maximizing shareholder wealth or value, rather than optimizing collective value among the broader network of stakeholders, since they are the main priority of the focal organization.

5. Achieving Socially Sustainable Projects Trough Stakeholder Inclusion

Along the lines of Di Maddaloni and Derakhshan (2019), this chapter puts more emphasis on the relationship between sustainability and project management with respect to the sustainability of the delivery of the product (the process of realizing the product), than to the

sustainability of the project deliverable (the product that the project realizes) (Kivilä et al., 2017). This emphasis is driven by the belief that through a sustainable process, project managers might better shape the ‘right product’ through social interactions and engagement with those actors operating in the project environment.

Stakeholder engagement has therefore become an important approach for examining and managing sustainability issues as it provides the means to understand the complex and pluralistic interests, relationships and interactions within and among various organizations (Freeman et al., 2010; Greenwood, 2007; Kujala & Sachs, forthcoming). Stakeholder engagement primarily refers to the process of symbolically or substantively involving stakeholders within organizational activities in which they are interested, or by which they are affected. As Greenwood (2007, p. 315) noted, it is a set of “practices the organization undertakes to involve stakeholders [...] in organizational activities.” In this view, organizations and their representatives open up opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to organizational activities. Conversely, stakeholders may engage themselves as individuals or representatives of societal actors such as non-governmental organizations. Such forms of stakeholder engagement may be performed, among others, in democratic “governance processes that guide the policies and practices of the firm” (Dawkins, 2015, p. 1) or through activism and social movements (de Bakker et al., 2013; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007) which may affect economic or broader societal outcomes.

Indeed, there is a lack of agreement in theory and practice over the ways in which the ‘disregarded’ stakeholders (e.g. local communities) have been treated and prioritized in megaprojects (Cuganesan & Floris, 2020; Derakhshan et al., 2019a; Di Maddaloni & Davis, 2017). This chapter differentiates between involvement (doing *to*) such as consultation and participation, and the engagement (doing *with*) leading to stakeholder inclusiveness. On one hand, involvement should be seen based on the degree to which stakeholders will influence the

final outcome and, although these preferences might be incorporated into a decision, these are rarely accepted without some form of modification or compromise (e.g. Hampton, 2009). On the other hand, engagement is an ongoing process in which various stakeholders (e.g. local communities) are brought together around the project and included in its operations or decision-making process (e.g. Bandé et al., 2021). For the intended contribution of this chapter, we define stakeholder inclusiveness as the extent to which (in principle) all stakeholders, such as local communities, are considered by the focal organization. This means that, through an engagement process, stakeholders are considered in the decision-making, regardless of their power in relation to the organization, as well as regardless of their potential to help or harm the organization (e.g. Eskerod et al., 2015; Freeman et al., 2007).

Recent focus has been given to ‘sustainable communities’ and social cohesion, in which social cohesion and inclusion are claimed in theory and advocated in policies to contribute to strong, fair and just societies for present and future communities (Keeys & Huemann, 2017; Lister, 2000). The European policy interpretation of ‘sustainable communities’ includes social aspects of sustainability and describes them as active, inclusive and safe (ODPM, 2006). Sustainable communities are claimed to include a sense of community in a healthy and safe environment (Burton et al., 2006), social contact and a stable community of residents who feel attached to where they live (Forrest & Kearns, 2001).

Because stakeholder theory relies on various foundational moral approaches, its linkage with sustainability is thus evident. In order to achieve better performance, organizations have to strive for sustainable development through fairness and transparency in their decision making. Listening and considering stakeholders’ needs and fears embracing an open dialogue and sustaining their expectations through active involvement in the decision-making process, is a prerequisite to shape better organization long-term strategies and sustainable development. This is in-line with the holistic approach to the management *for* stakeholders, which aims to

exceed stakeholders' needs and expectations in order to achieve better performance and benefits realization over time (Di Maddaloni & Derakhshan, 2019).

Therefore, in the face of an ever-increasing plethora of tools for engaging stakeholders in organizational processes (Castelló et al., 2016; Trittin et al., 2019; Trittin-Ulbrich et al., 2020) and the need for engaging, especially the disregarded voices in business and society (Crane, 2013), we need a better understanding of how stakeholder engagement and inclusion is performed and with what consequences. This is the tension currently facing major projects. According to Gil and Fu (2021), centrifugal forces – e.g., climate change, inequality of income, changes in societal values - are putting massive pressure on capital projects to widen their boundaries of responsibility and yet, traditional norms ruling the project management profession were centripetal, and crafted to avoid outside disruption to pre-determined targets and return on investment. To date, centrifugal forces are winning, and scope needs to be increasingly negotiated with society if capital investments want to gain consent to forge ahead.

6. Conclusions

Among the various definitions in the literature, social sustainability in construction in this chapter refers to the related management practices that could be beneficial to current and future stakeholders by providing a set of social outcomes, such as health, safety, self-identification, ease of access, and sense of belonging. Specifically, we define social sustainability from the engaged and inclusive governance perspective through which project organizations build their long-term strategies towards a set of ethical practices and societal wider inclusion in decision-making (e.g. Dawkins, 2015; Derakhshan et al., 2019b; Zeemering, 2018).

Against the normative background of stakeholder theory and the “stakeholder capitalism” movement (Freeman, 1994; Freeman et al., 2007), defined as the strategic and systematic

approach to achieving organizational purpose and goals by fostering the proactive involvement and harmonizing the interests of all stakeholders (World Economic Forum; 2020), this chapter reinforces that mere consultation is not enough for sustainable megaprojects.

Here, we detach from a managerialist bias that implicitly foregrounds organizational elites as decision-makers who act in the best interest of all stakeholders (Scherer & Palazzo, 2007). This organization-centric view on stakeholders (Bondy & Charles, 2018) has led towards an approach where knowledge about the nature of stakeholders' concerns, needs and interests are mostly constructed from the organization's perspective, and in which an unbalanced consideration of stakeholder voices is determined (Miles, 2017). Indeed, the organization-centric approach has sometimes contributed to the marginalization of 'secondary' or disregarded stakeholders, such as local communities, which cannot be governed through contracts, rules and regulations, as these actors are external to such instruments, especially in complex social and behavioral systems such as construction megaprojects typically resource-intensive and politically controversial (Denicol et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2019).

Stakeholder engagement refers to practices organizations undertake to involve stakeholders in a positive manner in their activities (Greenwood, 2007, p. 315), or to the embeddedness of stakeholders' objectives, expectations, actor relations and actions in the leadership of an organization (Maak, 2007). Stakeholder engagement can also be seen as an inclusive decision-making process that promotes equity, enhances local decision-making and builds social capital (Mathur et al., 2008). In this regard, the normative stance of stakeholder literature in both management and project studies (Eskerod & Huemann, 2013; Jensen & Sandström, 2013) has long emphasized the importance of adapting a more inclusive approach towards all stakeholders.

Therefore, departing from the normative stance of stakeholder theory, in this chapter we aimed to unfold the benefits of a more holistic and inclusive organizational approach to stakeholders. Project based organizations should yield a view of business as creating value for stakeholders, as this is the appropriate time to focus on the sustainability of construction megaprojects, in order to optimize the use of public resources after the post COVID-19 pandemic. We highlight the need of rethinking the delivery model of a construction industry called to foster broader societal outcomes and providing a greater positive impact in order to improve the life of the people they effect. In doing so, project organizations can more carefully embrace inclusive approaches to build stakeholder relationships and better considering their voices into the decision-making process in a way that can be sustained over time and thus achieving more social sustainable developments in complex systems, such as construction megaprojects.

In unfolding our conceptualization, we have started by problematizing the issue and interrogating theoretical backgrounds in project stakeholder studies. We have then linked the normative stance of stakeholder theory and the stakeholder inclusion perspective with the social dimension of sustainability. Taking forward the engaged and inclusive governance perspective of social sustainability, the focus is on the engagement towards the often-disregarded secondary stakeholders (i.e. local communities), with the aim of shaping directions in the way project organizations should look at their stakeholders as an end in creating value. We have then concluded by contextualizing our reasoning within the construction industry and megaproject management, as a learning platform and a fruitful setting in which to explore the way project organizations can improve their stakeholder engagement practices towards secondary actors, promoting their inclusion in the decision-making process, and thus improving the value and benefits these capital investments deliver to a broader range of project stakeholders by enhancing their inputs and support for a more sustainable world.

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